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DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS  
NSC FOR DORMANDY

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TENSIONS CONTINUE TO RISE AS LTTE  
HEROES' DAY APPROACHES

REF: COLOMBO 1897 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: James F. Entwistle, Deputy Chief of Mission. 1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) Summary: Tensions continue to flare in the north and east as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) plan to celebrate their annual November 26-27 Heroes' Day. Throughout the two regions, interlocutors report that Sri Lanka army and civilians have clashed in attempts to disrupt preparations for the upcoming remembrance. With the Government closed for the Buddhist Full Moon ("Poya") holiday November 26, military officials have been unavailable for reaction. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission reports, however, that everything is quiet at the present and they are in contact with both parties in the areas touched by clashes and unrest. While conflicts between the army and civilians occur from time to time, the build-up to Tiger leader Prabhakaran's annual policy speech is provoking even greater tension than usual. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Tensions continue to rise in the north and east as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) preparations for its November 26-27 Hero's Day commemorations provoke Sri Lankan army officials. There have been the following incidents, according to the pro-LTTE website, "TamilNet," and other contacts:

- The Sri Lanka Army (SLA) allegedly injured approximately 17 civilians in the northwest coastal town of Mannar during an attempt to destroy decorations for the upcoming Hero's Day celebrations;
- The Army also injured civilians in attempts to prevent them from raising the LTTE flag in the northcentral town of Vavuniya and the eastern town of Batticaloa. (Note: It is against the ceasefire agreement (CFA) for the LTTE flag to be raised in government-controlled areas);
- In the northern town of Jaffna, SLA and civilians also clashed during efforts to raise the LTTE flag. The situation returned to normal when the police took control of the area (Note: Under the CFA, the army is not allowed to engage in general enforcement of law and order.); and
- The Governor-General's meeting scheduled for November 26-27 in Trincomalee was canceled when the Tamil Secretary to the North and East Governor was reportedly "detained" by the LTTE.

3. (C) In response to these events, LTTE political leader S.P. Thamilselvan addressed a letter to Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) Head Furuhoed complaining about the Mannar and Vavuniya incidents, noting these tense situations may "create a totally undesirable confrontational position." Gajen Ponnambalam, a Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP from Jaffna, told POL FSN that SLA actions were a "systematic" attempt to disrupt the LTTE's functions. Not all areas preparing to celebrate Heroes' Day have been marred by unrest, however. Another TNA MP, Joseph Pararajasingham, told POL FSN on November 26 that police and SLA are cooperating and not interfering in LTTE functions in the general Batticaloa district.

4. (SBU) The Government of Sri Lanka is closed November 26 for the Buddhist Full Moon ("Poya") Day. Military officials have been unavailable for reaction to the incidents and LTTE comments about the SLA's intentions.

5. (C) In a November 26 conversation with polchief, SLMM spokesman Oskar Solnes confirmed many of the above incidents but noted that all the areas were quiet at present. He said that the SLMM brokered an agreement between the SLA and civilians in Mannar, allowing for the LTTE flag to be raised for part of the day on November 26. He further expected similar discussions to take place in Vavuniya later on November 25, noting that shooting from an unidentified source the night of November 26 had injured one person. Despite many complaints from the Army of LTTE flag raising in Jaffna, Solnes stated that the SLA had shown "great restraint" in response to the alleged violations. Lastly, he said that "LTTE influence" had been "instrumental" in the cancellation of the conference in Trincomalee. He confirmed that a Tamil civil servant was with the LTTE, but declined to describe him as "kidnapped." Although Trincomalee was quiet as of late morning November 26, Solnes said he expected tensions to rise if the Sinhalese nationalists Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)

followed through on a threat, publicized in local media, to protest the SLMM's failure to stop the LTTE from violating the CFA.

16. (C) Comment: While conflicts between the army and civilians occur from time to time, many citizens are tense in the buildup to Tiger leader Prabhakaran's annual policy speech. Given the lack of progress in returning to the negotiating table, many Sri Lankans are wondering whether the tenor of Prabhakaran's speech will be confrontational or conciliatory. If the latest clashes are any indication, it appears that Prabhakaran will likely take the harder line in his speech. End Comment.

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